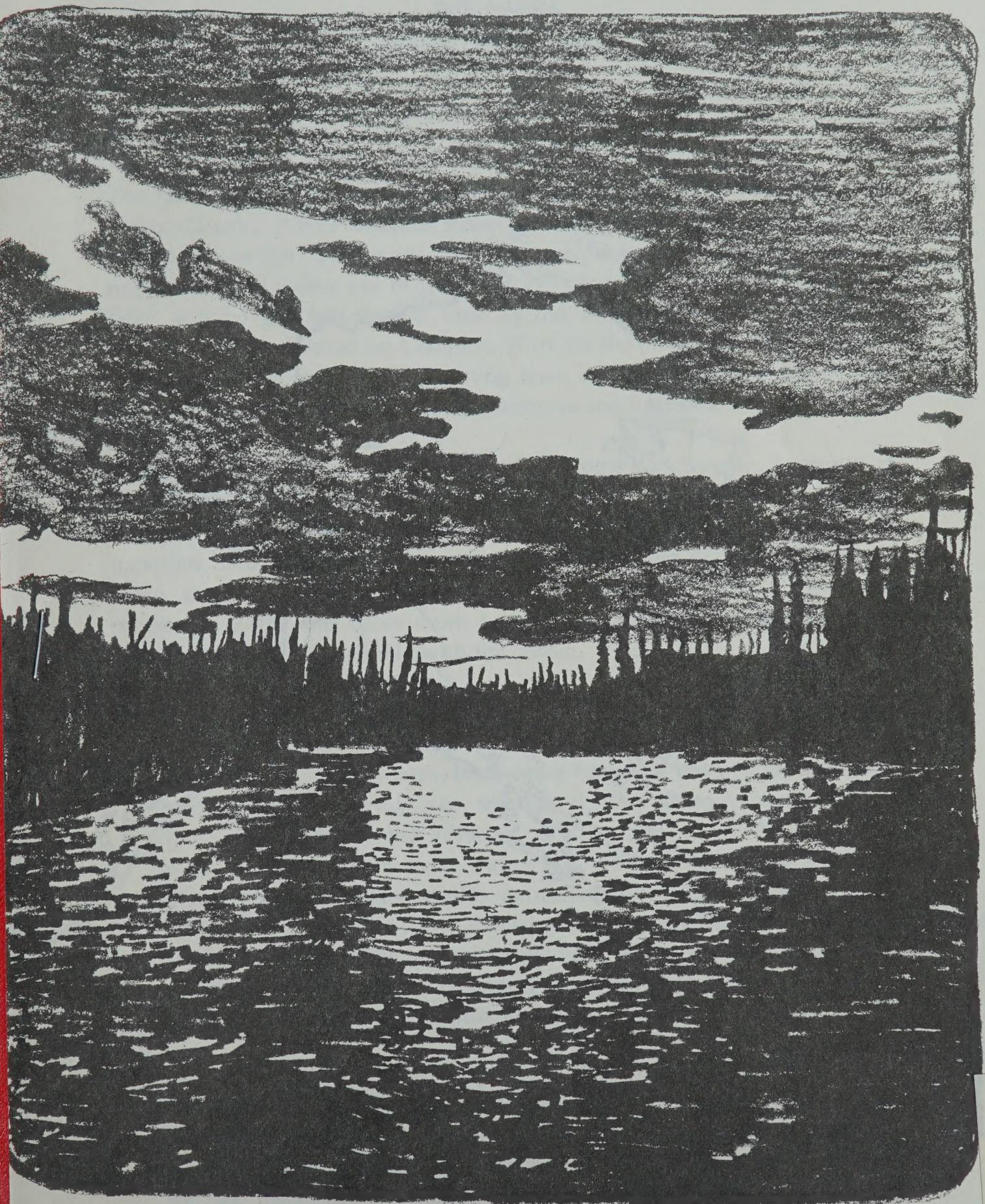


# PLANNING ISSUES

JUNE 1982

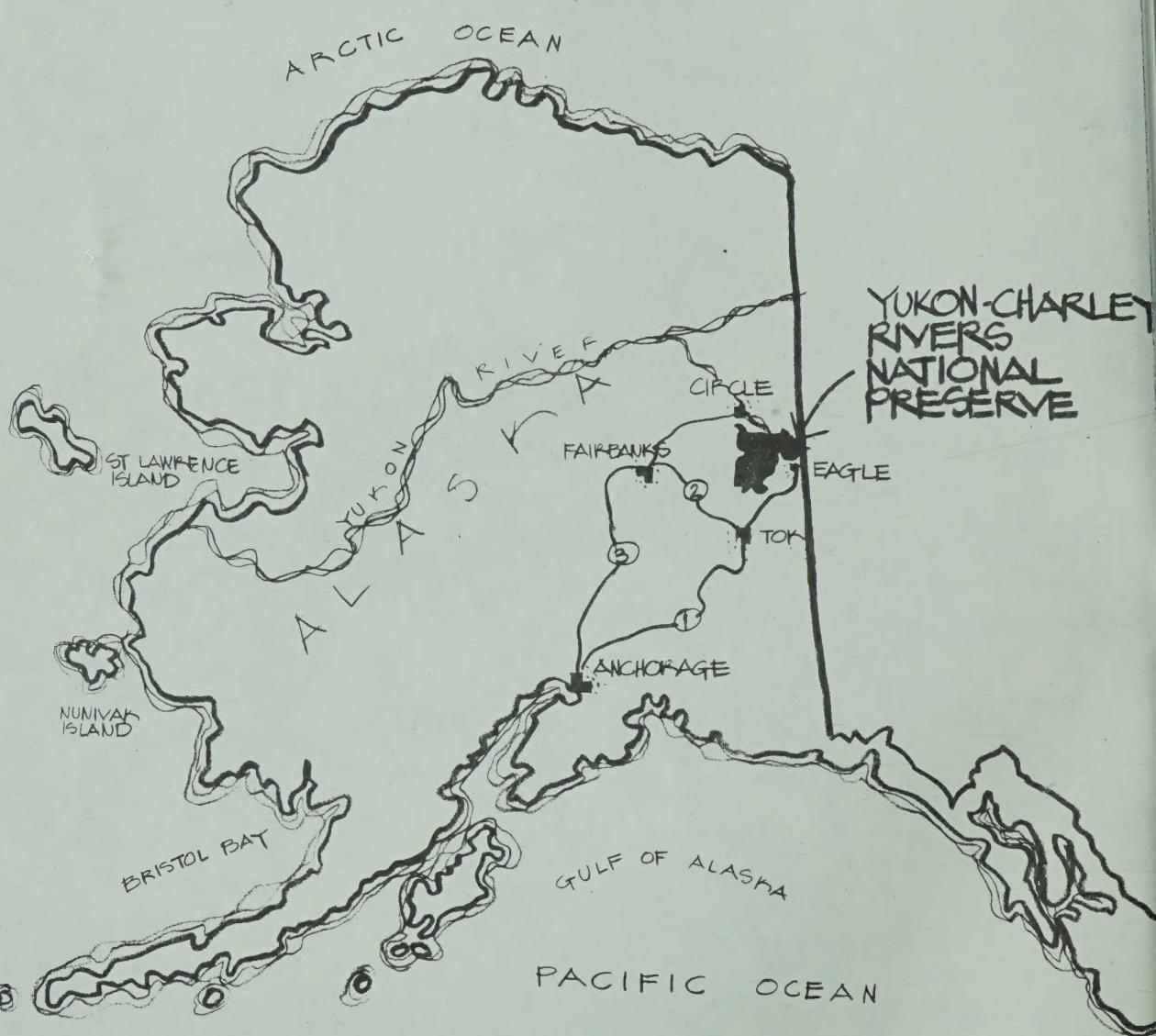


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# **YUKON-CHARLEY RIVERS NATIONAL PRESERVE**

National Park Service

General Management Planning Team

P.O. Box 64

Eagle, Alaska 99738

**HELLO:**

The National Park Service is preparing a general management plan (GMP) for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. Public input is an integral part of this plan, which will guide the management, development, resource protection, and visitor use of the preserve for the next 10 to 15 years. This GMP will be the first overall look at the future management since the preserve was established by Congress. Work on the plan started last summer, when some members of the planning team visited the area; some of you helped them gain familiarity with the preserve and its issues.

A GMP is prepared for every unit of the National Park System. Typically, it establishes a framework for managing the area and identifies any necessary facilities (means of access, visitor services, and staff facilities), including their locations and sizes. It is a conceptual document and will be followed by more specific studies or designs that implement the plan's ideas and proposals. GMPs and these more specific studies are developed by Park Service teams working closely with the public.

The GMP process has four major steps:

**STEP 1:** Issues important to the future of the area are identified and discussed. As a first step, the team reaches out to residents who are most familiar with the preserve, both within the preserve and in communities adjacent to it. Native and village corporations and state and federal agencies are also contacted for their information and opinions. In addition, many special interest groups are kept informed. Representatives of the general public both within and outside the state of Alaska are involved according to their degree of interest. This is the current stage of the Yukon-Charley plan.

**STEP 2:** Alternatives for management of the preserve are identified. Once the information from step 1 has been gathered, the planning team analyzes resource data, public opinion, National Park Service management policies, and legal requirements; the result is development of alternative ways of approaching issues and solving problems. The public then has the opportunity to comment on these alternatives.

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**STEP 3:** The alternatives are evaluated and a draft general management plan is prepared. The alternative proposals are refined in light of the comments and are evaluated for their impact on the environment; their effect on visitors, preserve residents, and nearby communities; and the cost of their implementation. The proposal resulting from this study is called a draft general management plan and includes an assessment of the effects of the proposal. The public is once again given the opportunity to review it and comment. Public meetings are held to discuss the draft plan; these meetings establish the opportunity for face-to-face dialogue.

**STEP 4:** The final general management plan is prepared. Based on step 3, the proposal is altered as necessary and becomes the plan. During this step, the effects of the plan are again assessed to see if an environmental impact statement is needed. If so, it is prepared in draft and final stages with comment time in between; if not, the plan is approved and released.

Hopefully, step 2 will be completed later this year. Completion of the final document by October 1983 is the goal for the Yukon-Charley planning effort.

Now that you are more familiar with the National Park Service planning process, your help is needed in step 1. The team has compiled a list of issues, some identified by the public and some added later; they are accompanied by background information that may be helpful in thinking about them. These issues are not ranked in any order of importance, nor are they necessarily all-inclusive. Therefore, this request to you is threefold:

1. Read the issue statements and note on the enclosed comment sheet how you think management of the preserve should address the situations portrayed.
2. Suggest additional issues and describe your feelings about them.
3. Rank the issues according to the importance they have for you and describe why. This is needed because time and money may not be available to treat all the issues equally.

A postage-paid comment sheet is provided. Feel free to add more sheets of paper if you need them and to return your response to us within a month. To make sure that you receive all future requests for comments and any additional material about the planning effort, please fill out the name and address blanks on the back of the comment sheet. If you want to receive future mailings but prefer your comments to remain anonymous, just send your name and address on a separate piece of paper to the same address in Eagle.

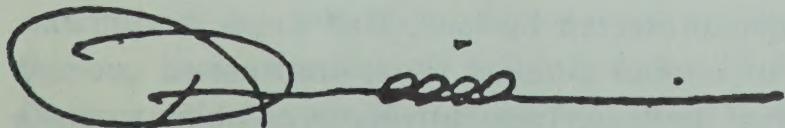


Remember, now is your opportunity to be active in this effort. Hopefully you will want to continue this activity in the future and to have a say in how your public lands will be managed. Preparing a plan is one thing, making it work is quite another . . . teamwork is necessary.

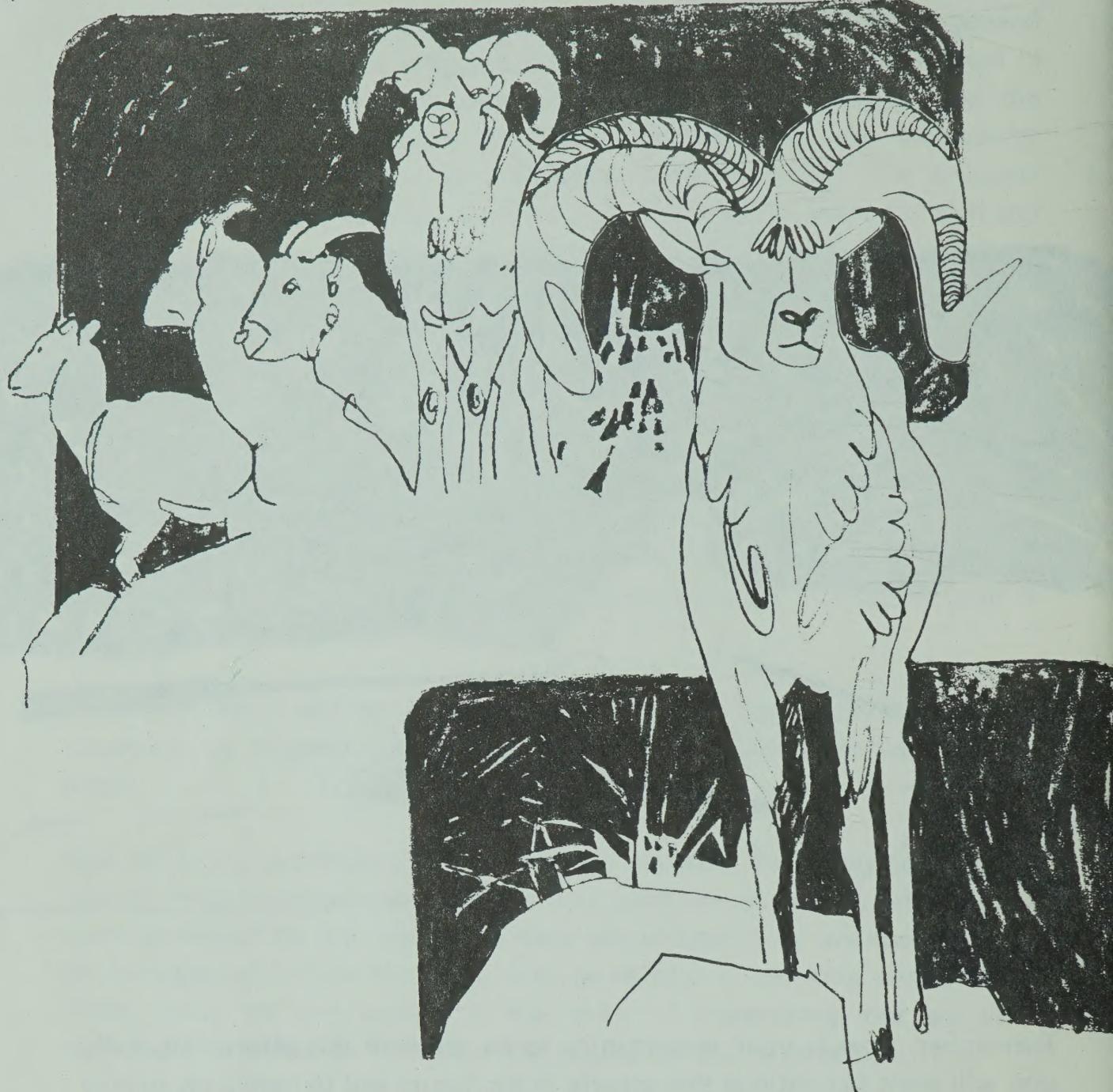
Anytime you have ideas on how to approach an issue or solve a problem, or have suggestions for improving the management or use of the preserve, please drop a note to the office in Eagle or stop by to discuss them. Together we can set the foundation for future management of the preserve, but we need your ideas and input to see the whole picture.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

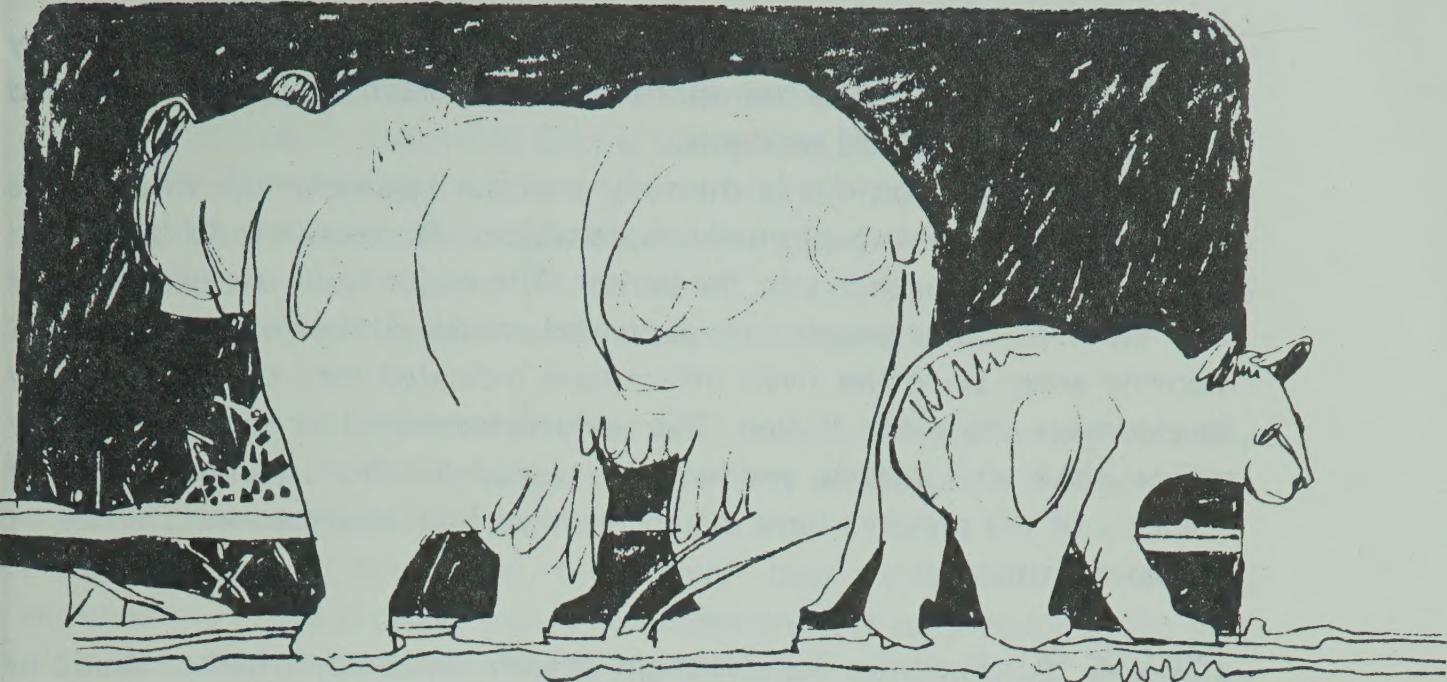
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Mihalic".

David A. Mihalic  
Superintendent



## BACKGROUND

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve was established by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. It is a National Park System area which encompasses two nationally significant resources: the Charley River watershed, an entire basin essentially undisturbed by modern man, and the upper Yukon River with its historic and natural features. The preserve includes diverse wildlife such as peregrine falcons (an endangered species protected by law), Dall sheep, and grizzly bears; a fine cross section of interior Alaskan flora; unsurpassed geologic formations; and a rich cultural heritage. These attributes combine to make Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve an unsurpassed representation of much of what people imagine is "Alaska."



## ISSUES

The following topics are those that have, thus far, been identified as needing to be addressed in the general management plan.

**ISSUE 1:** Land management goals of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the National Park Service sometimes differ, or their roles overlap. Coordination and perhaps cooperative agreements may be necessary.

One management purpose for the preserve is to conserve habitat and populations of fish and wildlife. The ADF&G is responsible for managing the populations; the Park Service manages the habitat. The ADF&G generally manages populations to provide sustained yield for consumptive use; the Park Service generally manages habitat to sustain natural healthy populations and return the environment to a more natural state if its processes have been altered or interrupted. The means of reaching these differing goals sometimes conflict; other times they complement each other.

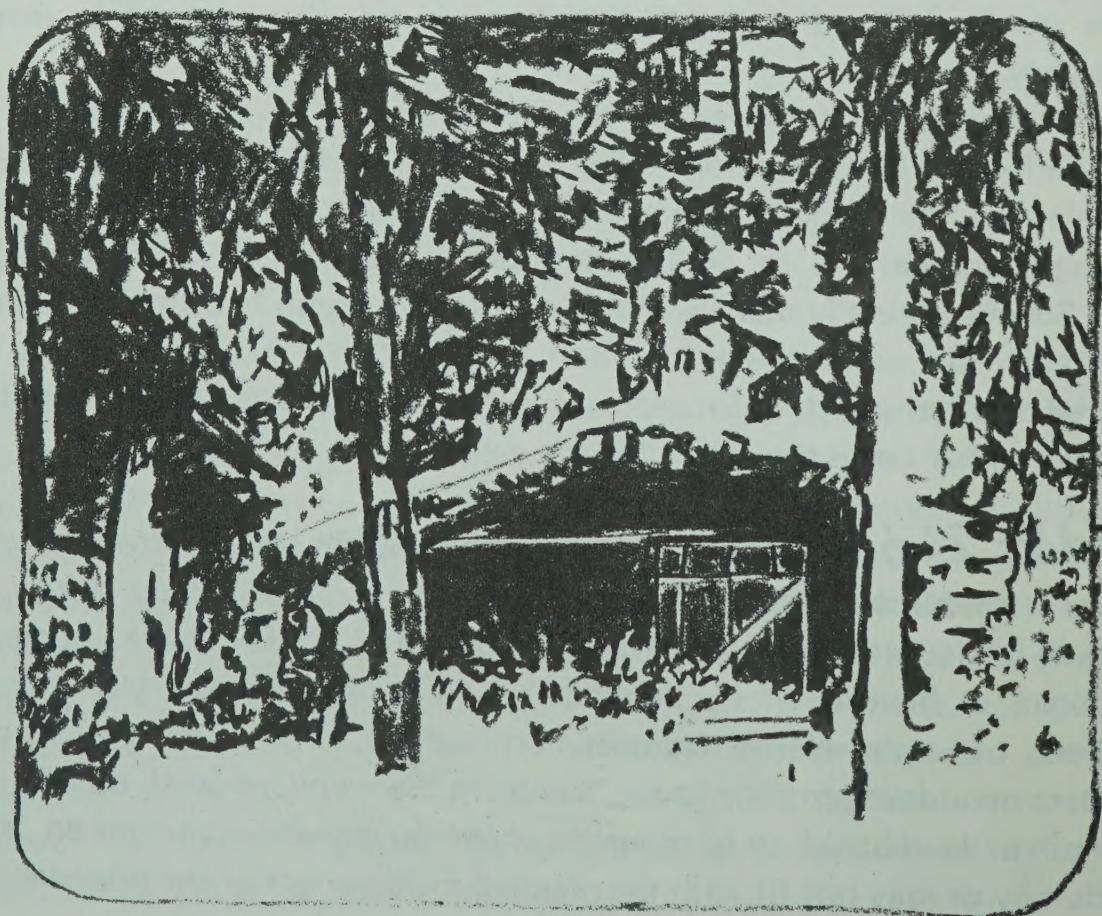
**ISSUE 2:** Development of private lands within the preserve may affect preserve resources, visitors, preserve residents, or other private landowners. Private lands within the preserve include small tracts such as homesites, cemetery or historic sites, patented mining claims, or larger tracts held by Doyon, Ltd. (the Native regional corporation), and village corporations. Owners may develop their lands, may leave them undeveloped, or may place them in a "land bank" to be managed cooperatively. Development on private lands may or may not fit with the planned management of the preserve.

**ISSUE 3:** Use on or adjacent to the Yukon River, including any river-associated facilities or transportation, will affect the preserve's use and management and its local residents.

The Yukon River corridor is the only transportation corridor through the preserve. Traffic consists of small private watercraft, a commercial barge, and dogsleds or snowmachines in the winter. The majority of use occurs on or near the river. Some people have expressed interest in designated camping or mooring areas along the river; others have indicated they do not want any development along the Yukon. The state is interested in establishing ferry service along this stretch; residents of nearby riverfront communities and residents of the preserve have mixed feelings about development, ferries, or increased visitors.

**ISSUE 4:** Facilities for overnight accommodations, whether inside or outside the preserve, will affect visitor use levels, the kinds of visitors, park management, and local residents.

The availability and locations of overnight accommodations will influence the level of use and the kinds of visitors the preserve will receive. Overnight accommodations can be inside and/or outside the boundaries and can range from backcountry camping to designated camping areas, campgrounds, cabins, or motels. If outside the preserve boundaries, these facilities will be provided by the private sector on private land. If inside, they will generally be provided by the National Park Service on public land, unless landowners wish to provide them on private land.



**ISSUE 5:** Boundaries defined by natural or topographic features allow the most effective management of resources and visitor use.

The Park Service is directed to discuss land protection strategies in the GMP. Except for the Charley River basin, most boundaries of Yukon-Charley do not follow natural divides such as watersheds, rivers, or ridgelines. Boundary adjustments can be discussed in terms of adjusting areas to complete a natural unit and identifying areas that may be suitable for trade.

**ISSUE 6:** Fire management methods, ranging from allowing naturally caused fires to burn to total suppression, or any combination, will affect the preserve's resources and its use.

Naturally caused fires have historically been influential in shaping ecosystems... the preserve area is no exception. Fire suppression in the past may have had detrimental effects on the plant communities or wildlife habitat but may also have protected property. Naturally caused fires that may be allowed to burn in the future, under controlled management, may threaten property, but may benefit certain wildlife habitat or populations. Sometimes the advantages of one method of fire management are the disadvantages of another.

**ISSUE 7:** The presence or habitat of endangered species may limit human use in the preserve.

One of the primary purposes of the preserve is to protect the habitat and populations of the peregrine falcon, an endangered species. Disturbance of falcons during critical times, such as nesting, may affect species recovery. In other parts of Alaska, some human uses, such as low-level aircraft flights, have been restricted near nesting sites during certain periods of the year.

**ISSUE 8:** It must be determined if fixed-wing aircraft landings in the upper Charley River basin are consistent with the preserve's purpose.

Preserve management is directed by ANILCA to protect the integrity of the Charley River watershed. The river was designated a wild river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. However, ANILCA also provides for the continuance of fixed-wing aircraft landings in the upper Charley watershed as long as they are consistent with protection. If fixed-wing landings are consistent with protection of the river basin, the existing airstrip may need to be improved or relocated for safety reasons. The airstrip is periodically scoured by ice, very rough, and considered unsafe by many. Improvement or relocation of the airstrip will impact the natural resources, be costly, and could increase visitor use. The only other access is by helicopter or foot. To many, this isolation helps ensure a wilderness or primitive experience in the Charley; others advocate that better access would allow more people to experience the Charley. If use increases to the extent that it harms the resource or the wilderness experience, some means of regulating that use will be needed.

**ISSUE 9:** The determination of wilderness suitability for parts of the preserve will limit development opportunities but will preserve the primitive character of the land.

ANILCA requires that all lands not already designated as wilderness be reviewed for their wilderness suitability. A determination of wilderness suitability does not mean automatic designation as wilderness; however, suitable lands will likely be managed as wilderness until Congress acts on whether to designate them. Most development is prohibited in designated wilderness (except that necessary for administrative use or public health and safety needs).

**ISSUE 10:** Additional subsistence use in the preserve, and structures such as cabins needed to support that activity, may impact those presently engaged in a subsistence lifestyle as well as the resources and public use of the preserve.

ANILCA provides for the continuation of a subsistence lifestyle by those already engaged in it. The resources of Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve are able to reasonably support only a limited number of subsistence uses or users. The subsistence lifestyle depends on factors such as the availability of adequate food and fuel, perhaps an adequate trapline territory, or a certain sense of isolation. These factors may be impacted by additional subsistence cabins and use.

**ISSUE 11:** A change in access to or within the preserve will profoundly affect its resources, management, and recreational and subsistence uses.

Existing access to and within Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve is limited to air, water, foot, and dogsled or snowmachine. Some people promote increasing the types of access available to include additional airstrips or a highway through the preserve. Others contend that Yukon-Charley is a unique place because of its limited access.

**ISSUE 12:** The location of NPS administrative and visitor contact facilities, if inside the preserve, will impact the environment and be extremely costly. If adjacent to the preserve, they will socially and economically affect the community in which they are located.

A small staff currently administers the preserve, but eventual levels of programs or use will influence the size of future staffs. To be effective and efficient, the staff needs to be within or near the preserve. Locating staff facilities within the preserve would require new development such as structures, access, water, and waste disposal, which would be costly in terms of environmental impact and cash outlay. Adjacent communities that have existing access, water, and buildings or building sites have expressed widely divergent feelings about the presence of administrative facilities.

## MAILING LIST

Please continue your participation in the preparation of this general management plan. To assure that you are on our mailing list, please fill in your name and address in the space below.

I would like to continue to participate in future aspects of planning for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve:

Name:

Address:

If you want to receive future mailings but prefer your comments to remain anonymous, just send the same information on a separate card to the address in Eagle.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Charley Rivers National Preserve  
National Park Service  
General Management Planning Team  
P.O. Box 64  
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# COMMENT SHEET

After reading the descriptions and backgrounds of the issues, please share your comments with the planning team. Each issue is identified on this comment sheet, along with room for you to note your reactions and ideas. Afterwards, please add any issues not covered and then rank the three or four issues most important to you. The ranking of issues is particularly important — to make headway on all of them requires some priority system so that the most important ones are given proper treatment. Feel free to attach extra sheets if there is not adequate space for your comments. When finished, please tape or staple the sheet so the NPS address in Eagle is showing and mail it or drop it off at the office.

## ISSUES

**1:** Federal and State Resource Management Objectives

**2:** Private Land and Preserve Management

**3:** Use Along the Yukon River

**4:** Overnight Accommodations

**5:** Boundary Adjustments



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve

General Management Planning Team

P.O. Box 64

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